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# THE ARTFUL AMATEUR.

*presented by (P. R. Salmon) R. Pentlake*

**I**T appears, judging from the large number of queries addressed to the photographic press, that the amateur meets with more difficulties in the manipulations of printing and toning than in any other branch of the photographic art. A beginner's notion of printing is very crude; to his mind it means just simply sticking a piece of sensitive paper in contact with a negative until dark enough, and he looks upon the negative when washed and dried as past all further treatment. There is, however, as much scope, if not more, for the display of artistic skill in making a print, as there is in producing a negative.

I would first of all emphasize the fact that it is only possible to get a really good print, one that is perfect in every respect, from a really good negative; but, with care, a passable print may be obtained from a bad negative, by what is called "dodging," "faking," or "doctoring."

Let us, before proceeding further, consider the question:—

## WHICH IS THE BEST PAPER TO USE?

The photographer himself is the most suitable person to answer this. The market is flooded with different brands. Each certainly have their respective merits, and one is, perhaps, more suited to our requirements than another. If we are inclined to experiment, it must be done without prejudice, and the makers' instructions must be closely followed. After giving a few of the best-known makes a fair trial, we shall be able to choose that which is most suited to our purpose. It is advisable when once a suitable brand has been found, and its working thoroughly mastered, to avoid any temptations to improve it, bearing in mind that every dealer and maker says or thinks his own the best. Speaking from a theoretical point of view, I should say the most suitable "print out" papers for use with various negatives are—for good negatives, any paper; for very thin and weak negatives, only the gelatine, and for dense negatives the plain or matt surface paper.

There seems to be, generally speaking, great fascination in the making of a negative, but less in finishing a print; this is difficult to understand, as the former is but a step up the ladder, and simply a means to an end.

As stated before, a good negative will give a good print, but if I estimate correctly, not 50 per cent. of amateurs' negatives come from the fixing bath perfect. With such a fact as this before us, it clearly shows that some remedy is needed. The remedies are met with galore, in the form of intensifiers and reducers. Great objection, however, is raised against these methods, on the ground that negatives treated with the former go spotty and subsequently fade, whilst with the reducer many find a difficulty in stopping the action at the right moment. These methods may be found in any of the text books.

It may be, therefore, that a few other methods of dealing with

#### FAULTY NEGATIVES,

without the use of chemicals, will be acceptable.

Let us now, in imagination, examine a negative. The shadows may appear too dense, one side thicker than the other, foreground too thin, the distance indistinct, etc. All these matters require attention and correction, and, instead of the elaborate, I prefer the simple methods.

The simplest and most effective is by means of tissue paper and blacklead. These tools may be found in every household. I cut a piece of tissue paper the same size as the negative, and stick it lightly by the edges on to the glass side; when dry it may be worked upon with blacklead by a stump or the finger tip. Perhaps the sky is thin and prints dark; if so, rub the blacklead upon the tissue paper over the sky portion where it is intended to print lighter. At frequent intervals in the sky, extra dabs may be put in the form of clouds; these, when properly done, show up very effectively in the finished print. In fact, everything that prints too quickly may be held back by carefully working over the desired part with the blacklead, or a pencil.

If in a group the faces print too dark, a touch of light blue paint will greatly improve the result. A blue pencil, too, is exceedingly handy.

A simple method of temporary blocking the sky out altogether is to hold the negative, glass side down, over a piece of lighted camphor, or the fumes of a paraffin lamp, until smoked quite black. The surplus upon the landscape



portion may be wiped away with a soft rag. Great care in handling the negative is necessary, as the blocking is very fragile and easily damaged. If a permanent blocking out is required, black varnish or opaque may be used.

If the thin parts are all in one portion of the negative, a better plan, after they have printed to the required depth, is to protect them by a piece of card laid upon the outside of the frame, or with a pocket-handkerchief, which can be roughly adapted to the outline between the dense and thinner portions, allowing the printing to proceed through the uncovered portions for a further period.

If, on the other hand, parts of a negative take a long time to print, or are exceedingly harsh, they may be made to print quicker by dabbing a little vaseline or oil upon the tissue paper, or by cutting away that part over the required portion. In the latter case, the paper may be stuck wholly upon the glass. The light, of course, penetrates more rapidly through the parts cut away, thereby helping the denser portions on before the parts covered by the tissue paper have time to go beyond the proper depth.

Another dodge for increasing the intensity of light on the denser portions is by means of a magnifying glass placed in front of the frame. The time required for printing the covered patch is reduced to one-fourth. The rays must not be brought to a focus on the negative, or the heat will crack the glass.

Matt varnish may be used with success. The varnish is flowed over the glass side of the negative and worked upon in the same manner as tissue paper. In cases where the negative is very thin, the varnish may be tinted with a pale yellow dye. Parts which are required to print quicker may be scraped away with a knife. Many find a difficulty in applying varnish to a plate. The plate should be held in a horizontal position, and the varnish poured in the centre and carefully carried from corner to corner, until the whole plate is covered, and then the surplus returned to the bottle. With practice, varnishing becomes easy, but the amateur usually sends more up his coat sleeve than on the plate.

The objection to matt varnish is that it is very liable to damage, and I find that ground glass has many advantages. To use it, take a piece of ground glass and place it, ground side up, on the top of the negative, film side up; work on it, to increase the high-lights, with blacklead or blue pencil—the latter for medium effects. Where it is desired to increase the

shadows, use a little weak gum water—this takes away the matt appearance, and makes the glass transparent. After this is done, place the ground glass at the back of the negative, and print as usual. A softer effect may be produced by placing the ground glass upon the back of the negative, working upon it and printing as usual. In the latter case, two thicknesses of glass intervene between the paper and ground side of glass; in the former case, only one.

Another very simple way of increasing the density of any portion of a negative, is to mix some of Judson's yellow or orange dye with half an ounce of gum Senegal, and apply thinly with a camel hair brush, moistened with saliva. It adds enough density to parts of the negative required without shutting out the detail.

A marked improvement may be made in a print by printing under green glass or green tissue paper. If a negative be denser at one end than the other, through uneven development or uneven coating, the printing frame may be placed at the bottom of a deep, lidless box, one side of the frame resting against the side, the thinner portion being at the bottom.

Transparent spots, or pinholes, are often found in a negative. As these will appear ugly black marks upon the print, they should be carefully spotted out when the negative is dry. For this purpose, some Prussian blue water colour and a very fine camel hair pencil will be required. It should be applied with an almost dry brush, after the manner of stippling, and on no account should it be laid on in washes. Err on the side of making the spot more opaque than the surrounding parts, rather than the reverse, as it will print white, and the spot may be evened up on the finished print.

Chalkiness is a very common fault, and to remedy this a very suitable plan is to rub the film on the chalky parts with a piece of wash-leather, strained over the finger tip, and soaked with methylated spirit. This plan will improve chalky or hard negatives, in a manner little short of miraculous. For interiors it is especially valuable, as it will often entirely remove halation.

However careful we are, it is impossible to get along without sometimes cracking a negative. When this happens get a piece of clean glass the same size as the negative, and carefully bind the two together with a lantern slide strip. When printing from the negative, the frame must be continually shifted, and not allowed to remain in one position for a minute's duration. A meat-jack comes in handy here. A



flat board may be suspended in place of the meat, the frame laid thereon, and the whole set going outside. The print will then leave the frame without the slightest trace of the crack showing.

Amateur prints are, more often than not, turned out with glaring white skies. This should not be, as it is unnatural and untruthful; such sights never appear in nature. This, then, brings before us the question of

#### CLOUD PRINTING.

Fairly-lighted and well-defined clouds are rarely obtained on the same negative as the landscape, although, with a properly-constructed shutter, this is possible. We have, therefore, to adopt the method of printing in the clouds from a separate negative. It is advisable to have five or six, or even more, good cloud negatives; if not, we shall most likely fall into that popular error of printing, and, perhaps, exhibiting side by side, two landscapes with the same cloud—an event that could scarcely happen in nature. It is an easy matter to photograph clouds. Those clouds with the sun just off the angles of view are the easiest to obtain, and, of course, the best illuminated. Use a slow plate and about  $f/22$ , giving about  $\frac{1}{16}$ th of a second. Use a normal developer, and, so as to get a clear, quick-printing negative, say pyrosoda. Do not elevate the camera too much; low elevation gives better perspective. The elevation should be considered when fitting clouds to a landscape. Clouds from the zenith are seldom suitable for landscapes with a low horizon, and *vice versa*. In using them, be careful that the shape of the clouds does not follow the lines of the landscape too closely, or that objects projecting into the sky do not have the effect of propping up, as it were, circular-shaped pieces of cloud, or come exactly midway between two similarly-shaped pieces. Variety and balance should be aimed at.

It is advisable to take cloud negatives a size larger than required; the print may then be placed in the position of cloud best suited to the picture, whereas if the cloud negative be the same size as the picture we are restricted to one position. In order to select the cloud negative best suited to a print, I hold the negative up to the light, and, placing the print behind it, change the position of each until a suitable portion of cloud covers the required space on the print.

Having obtained our cloud negative, the printing in is of little difficulty. The method usually recommended is to cut paper masks to fit the landscape and sky portions, using each

in their turn, but this I consider unsatisfactory, as there is always a difficulty in avoiding a line, showing the junction of clouds and landscape. Clouds, when properly printed in, should show no line or indication of the join, and be, in fact, indistinguishable from clouds taken with the landscape. There are many methods of working, but I prefer the following :—I keep a perfectly level board covered with felt, on which I place the landscape print, face upwards (of course, the sky must be white, or nearly so). A cloud negative, which is larger than the print, is then carefully adjusted in the required position over it, using little weights on the ends of the plate to keep it in its place. A thin board or sheet of card is then placed so as to cover the landscape, to within half an inch of the horizon. A soft handkerchief or duster is then placed on the top, so as to cover the landscape, and to follow as closely as possible the outline. The whole is then exposed to diffused daylight, and the edges of the towel slightly moved every few seconds, constantly varying the outline, and thus avoiding any sign of junction in the printing. It should be remembered that on a hazy day, when we have an undefined horizon, clouds are not often seen in the lower part of the sky; they should, therefore, be lightly printed. A little practice soon renders this a simple and easy matter; in fact, it is much more difficult to describe than do.

Sometimes, when developing landscapes, good clouds appear in the sky, but alas! before detail is obtained in the half-tones or shadows the clouds have gone. The clouds, compared with the rest of the picture, are over exposed, and so are obscured by the prolonged development. They may, however, be held back, when the proper density is reached. Procure a wide-mouthed four-ounce bottle, fill it with water, and add half an ounce of potassium bromide. Commence development weak in alkali, or, if the solutions are kept in stock, ready mixed of a given strength, as is frequently the case when sodas are used, restrain well with bromide. In a short time the sky and high-lights will appear; when this happens, with a soft sable brush, paint all over the sky with the stock bromide solution, carefully dodging round the edges of the landscape, holding the dish so that the bromide will not run over it, the developer being poured off. If these operations are carefully carried out, the negative when fixed will be found to have a sky in harmony with the rest of the picture. After the sky has been painted all over, the developer must, of course, be applied again, to bring





"EGYPTIAN" VIGNETTE

*From*  
*"The Practical Photographer."*





out other details in the picture. Let us now look to  
 "VIGNETTING" AND "MASKING."

The term vignette is understood to mean a gradual softening or blending of a picture into nothingness, and when properly made is, perhaps, the most pleasing style of print.

Beginners generally look upon these methods as beyond their reach, and only fit for a professional photographer, whilst some are vignette mad for a short time, and turn out vignettes by the dozen, whether the subject is suitable or not. Vignetting requires considerable care, and calls for no little taste and skill.

Two rules must be observed:—(1). When negatives are to be vignetted dark backgrounds must not be used; the other extreme, white backgrounds, must also be avoided. (2). The vignette must not closely follow the outlines of the figure.

Two shapes are usually adopted, oval and egg-shape, the latter being used when it is desirable to include the bust. Vignetting may be accomplished in many ways. The one in general use is by cutting the desired aperture in a piece of card or zinc, laying it on the top of the frame to be vignetted; cover the lot with a piece of tissue paper, and print in the shade. Ruby glass, with a white opening in the centre, is often used. Wax paper vignettes are supplied by most dealers; they are much cheaper than glass, the centres, instead of being transparent, are translucent, thereby acting as ground glass and producing softer effects, especially with thin, delicate negatives.

The further away a vignette is from the paper the more gradual is the gradation, and more effective is the blending of the shadows and the white margin. Vignettes on a tinted ground are made by removing the printed vignette from the frame, covering with a sheet of clear glass, protecting the printed portion with a piece of red or black paper, and exposing to diffused light until the desired shade is obtained, but in no case must the tint be darker than the original background.

The secret of good vignetting is slow printing. On no account should the frame be exposed to bright sunlight, or harsh lines will show instead of even gradation, and the sun will leak in more at one side than the other, and so give an uneven print.

Vignetting glasses and papers may be dispensed with altogether by using what is called a "sand" dodge. Procure

a piece of ground glass or opal large enough to cover the frame, and glue round the edges a wall, about an inch in height, made of wood or cardboard. Having placed it over the frame containing the picture to be vignetted, pour into it some fine sand, just enough to render the bottom opaque; then, with the finger, form the desired shape of opening, and give the top-box arrangement a tap or two to equalise the sand. When it is desired to examine the progress of printing, lift the top off bodily. If it is desired to tint the edges of the print, the sand may be piled upon the centre of the image.

Printing in oval or other shaped masks is another popular method. The shapes may be purchased from any dealer, of much better shape and more cleanly cut than an amateur can make himself.

To produce a white margin, a mask with the desired opening is put between the negative and sensitive paper, and printed in the usual way; the centre, of course, prints as usual, while the margin, being protected by the mask, remains perfectly white. To produce a black margin proceed in the same manner as before; when printed, take it from the frame and carefully cover the printed portion with a disc; cover with a piece of clear glass and print margin to depth required. When a perfectly black margin is required, the simplest method is to lay a disc upon a piece of clear glass in the printing frame, and print margin till black; remove the glass and insert negative in its place, and print the portion required in the space that has been protected by the disc.

#### EGYPTIAN VIGNETTES (*see frontispiece*)

are a very pretty novelty, and do not involve much trouble. A dead black or a deep red background should be used; pose the sitter as usual, profile preferable, taking care to have the subject well lighted, but as little light as possible on the background. A piece of cloth or cardboard is hung to the top of the bellows *inside* the camera to shield the light from the waist of the sitter. The material must not be hung too close to the plate, or a sharp line will show and so spoil the effect; the nearer the lens the shield is hung the more diffused will the line be. Experience will soon teach the proper distance and size; it varies, of course, with size of camera. A more simple method, and one I prefer, is to cut a hole in a piece of card, as near as possible to the shape of the bust, and fix the same in the folds of the bellows between the lens and plate; no light can then possibly reach the edges of the plate, the well-lighted bust only showing. No other vignetting



arrangements are necessary—simply print from the negative in the usual way. If the edges of the print do not print dark enough, sand can be piled over the image until the edges reach the required depth.

Border negatives are very pretty, but some of the designs are so glaring that they distract the eye from the portrait. A print is first taken from the border negative; afterwards the print is placed on the portrait negative, the part—bust or vignette—to be printed in, fitting into the blank space left by the opaque part of the border negative, the rest of the negative being covered up with a duster or a piece of card-board.

Finally, I will touch upon

#### “COMBINATION” PRINTING.

Prints were produced by this method as early as 1858, by that well-known man, H. P. Robinson, whose picture, “Fading Away,” caused considerable sensation at the time. Five negatives were used in its production. A year previous to this, Rejlander produced his picture, “The Two Ways of Life,” in which no less than thirty negatives were employed.

We need not, however, go to this extent, as a fine picture may often be obtained by the use of two negatives, and, by the judicious use of such, pictures may be made that never existed in nature, and the greatest difficulty a combination printer has to contend with is not to produce the impossible.

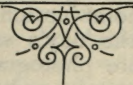
One of the most suitable applications of combination printing is the introduction of suitable backgrounds and surroundings to figure studies. Care should be taken not to have landscape and figures lighted from different ways. Seaside subjects frequently suffer owing to the flat, still-like condition of the water. Perhaps another negative may contain a suitable sea, full of motion, and so, by the judicious blending of the two, we obtain a picture worth looking at. A portrait taken in a backyard may often be made presentable by printing the figure amidst suitable surroundings. One of the finest combination prints I have ever seen is Robinson’s “When the day’s work is done.” The old couple in the picture were photographed in his studio; the interior was found afterwards, and the old folks printed in. Five or six negatives, I believe, were used in the production of the picture.

To print in a background, first carefully block all the figure negative out, all but the figure, with opaque or black varnish, working round the delicate parts on the film side, and the

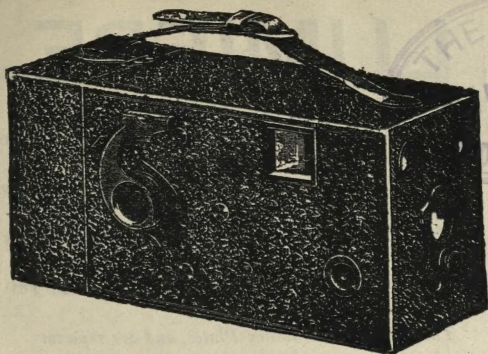
straighter lines of drapery, etc., on the glass side. Make a print from this, which will show the figure standing against a white background. With a small, sharp pair of scissors, cut carefully round the figure and lay it in the light to blacken. Select a suitable background negative, place it in a frame, and place the blackened figure on the part you require it to appear when finished, and print as usual. When printed we have a background print with a white place for the figure to occupy. Again place the blocked out figure negative in a frame, and carefully adjust the white part of the background print over the figure, and print as usual. This is a very delicate operation, because, if the two do not exactly coincide, a white line will be left at one side and a black one at the other side.

Some advocate painting on the print in the following manner:—The negative containing the figure is blocked out with opaque as before, and a print taken. The figure on the print is then painted over with a non-actinic water-colour—red or gamboge. When the paint is dry, the print is exposed behind a landscape negative, taking care that the latter is not printed too deep. The washing, of course, removes the paint, when the print is toned and fixed as usual.

Groups of cattle can often be printed in a landscape with good effect, and in time, with a little practice, we may be able to combine the good portions of three or four negatives into one picture. Considerable artistic taste and skill is, of course, required; knowledge of light, shade, and perspective, too; and, above all, the patience of Job.







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